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FLASHBACK

Washington County Historical Society
Preserving the Past for the Future
Volume 54 **Autumn 2004** **Number 4**

CONTENTS

THE OLD MAN AND THE STUDENTS: THE WESLEY FOUNDATION YEARS OF A. W. MARTIN
A. W. Martin Jr. 155

THE WASHINGTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY: THE BEGINNINGS Matthew Kirkpatrick 171

ROBERT BEARDEN REMEMBERS 175

Book Review: *The Journal of J. L. Dickson*
Garrick D. Hildebrand 185

INDEX TO VOLUME 54 188

Cover: A. W. Martin, director of the Wesley Foundation, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, in 1960 (Courtesy Wesley Foundation) .

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Wesley Foundation Chapel, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, 1962 (Courtesy Wesley Foundation).

THE OLD MAN AND THE STUDENTS: THE WESLEY FOUNDATION YEARS OF A. W. MARTIN

A. W. MARTIN JR.

A. W. Martin, one of the leading Methodist ministers in Arkansas in the mid-twentieth century, left his position as district superintendent of the Fort Smith District in 1945 to become professor of church administration at the School of Theology at Southern Methodist University in Dallas. A compulsory retirement rule in 1957 forced his retirement there at age 65, but church law permitted him to continue as a minister until he was 72. So the bishop and cabinet, made up of the district superintendents in the North Arkansas Conference of the Methodist Church, faced an interesting problem: what to do with him? When Martin had left Arkansas he could have laid claim, if he had been interested, to an unofficial title as the ranking minister in the conference next to the bishop. He was the superintendent of the district that, prior to the equalization of superintendents' salaries, had paid the most, and he was the minister who was elected first as a delegate to the General Conference of 1944. In the intervening twelve years the work of the conference had gone on, and other ministers were now the superintendents and leaders. Martin could not expect to come back as a superintendent or even as the pastor of a large church, but at the same time the cabinet could hardly take a former leader who still had a tremendous amount of energy and ability and treat him as an old horse ready to be put out to pasture. Dr. Roy Bagley, the

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A. W. Martin Jr. is Professor of Religion Emeritus at Oklahoma City University, where he taught from 1981 until 1998. An ordained United Methodist minister, he has served pastorates in Tennessee, Arkansas, and New Mexico.

superintendent of the Fayetteville District, came up with an ingenious suggestion: name him to minister to Methodist students at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville, as director of the Wesley Foundation. This was an unusual suggestion, since the pattern of appointments at that time was almost invariably to name young men to student work.

A.W. and his wife, Lloyd, hit the ground running in the summer of 1957. They soon became acquainted with the old residence at 730 West Maple Street just across the street from the university student center, referred to as the "old termite house" by one student, that served as the center for the Foundation's work. By the end of the summer they had a growing understanding of the challenges of student work.

As the fall term began, Martin spoke, after being introduced by President Jim Loudermilk of the Foundation's student group, to an interdenominational vespers service on "The Significance of Personal Decisions." The campus newspaper announced a full schedule of Foundation activities for the semester, with a Sunday program of morning classes and worship and evening choir practice, supper, and worship at Central Methodist Church, a few blocks east of the campus. Martin taught classes for freshmen on Sunday morning, first on "Religious Problems Confronting Freshmen" and then "How to Tell Right from Wrong." Weekday events at the house near the campus included morning watch, vespers three afternoons a week, and weekly bull sessions and Bible study groups, with Martin teaching a section on the Gospel of Mark. Another major task before the end of the semester would be to host the annual meeting of Methodist students from universities and colleges throughout the state.

The question of an older man's ability to relate to college-age students was quickly answered. A grandfatherly type was a much safer counselor than a young man just out of seminary, and students felt secure talking with A.W. about their personal problems, including their romantic life. He gained a reputation as

something of a "devilish matchmaker," to quote one student, and apparently on more than one occasion would close a conversation with a young man by saying something like, "If I were single and a lot younger, I wouldn't waste any time getting to know [name of young woman] better!" Although one student pointed out to him that he was not successful in his efforts at playing cupid where she was concerned, he conducted many weddings, either at the Foundation or in churches around the state, for couples who met at the university and who had seen their relationships ripen into committed love as they participated in Foundation activities.

Martin liked to talk and enjoyed a good bull session as much as any college student. He could talk sports with the most avid fan, and he enjoyed an argument enough that he may even have dared on occasion to suggest the superiority of Southern Methodist Mustang football over the Razorbacks! He could talk farming and small-town life with those who came from that kind of background and were having problems adjusting to a large university campus. And of course he was willing to talk church with anyone anytime, combining a fierce loyalty with an equally sharp critique, as students struggled to come to terms with their relationship with an institution about which many of them were developing serious questions.

Even as he argued with students from time to time, he respected their opinions and heard them out. Their role as leaders in the work of the Foundation was crucial to his style of directing. One student who was at the university when the Martins arrived in 1957 remembered, in a letter to them on their retirement in 1964, "windy council meetings or study sessions" when students talked "with all the wisdom and arrogance of nineteen or so years" and said, "I was also grateful for certain times when you were silent . . . I marvel at how you could manage to listen patiently, and, not only that, could make us feel that our views deserved a hearing. I can conclude now that you made us feel that way because you believed that our views did need to be heard."

Another aspect of Martin's personality that facilitated working with college students was his sense of humor. It did not primarily take the form of "telling jokes but in seeing the humor in life." The remarks were not always original, but they were almost always to the point. To persons who wanted to go slow on desegregation, he commented that it would not "be less painful for a dog to get its tail cut off one inch at a time." He once reminded Jim Loudermilk, regarding the struggle to end racism, "that sometimes you have to get in a field with a bull, but you don't have to wear a red shirt when you do it." Several years later, when Loudermilk resigned under pressure as director of the Wesley Foundation to take a campus ministry position in California, A.W. commented on a news report that Bishop [Paul V.] Galloway had said that Loudermilk "requested the transfer": "That is about like saying that a man who was giv[en] his choice of being hanged or shot, 'requested his execution.'"

Martin's previous roles as a pastor, district superintendent, and professor of church administration had all called for good administrative skills, and they stood him in good stead as he led a group of student officers in planning and carrying out a multifaceted program that included daily worship, serious study on theological and ethical issues, participation in state, regional, and national meetings, a choir, a drama group, numerous social events and intramural activities, participation in university-wide events like Religious Emphasis Week, and outreach activities in the community.

A letter from Martin to the Wesley Foundation Council early in his second year at Fayetteville illustrates both his administrative skill and his understanding of what a full program should include. Anticipating that meetings in Little Rock were going to prevent his attending a council meeting, he wrote to his "Friends and Fellow Workers" first to remind them about an upcoming open house and about chartering a bus to take members to a state Methodist Student Movement conference. He then moved to a concern about

making the local program stronger, giving concrete suggestions for ways to make committees function better. The second half of the letter reminded the council of earlier discussions "about the need for a positive Christian witness ... as we live our lives daily on the campus" and then stated his belief that students, "more than any other group," were in a position to make an "effective witness of the Christian Gospel" in a time of "tensions over the racial situation in Arkansas." He concluded his letter, "I ... not only call upon you, the responsible officers and leaders of Wesley Foundation, but pledge myself to a deeper and more consistent devotion to the practical, day by day, opportunities presented in and through Wesley Foundation for witnessing for the faith that we profess."

Other strengths that Martin brought to ministry at a university campus were intelligence, intellectual curiosity, and mental alertness. They made him a natural in helping students plan the classes and forums of the Foundation program where they struggled to come to terms with the relevance of the Christian faith to life on a university campus. He was equally willing to invite guest speakers or discussion leaders on a variety of topics and to make presentations himself, and he helped to create an atmosphere where students felt comfortable raising whatever question came to mind.

A Sunday program early in Martin's third year at Fayetteville makes it more than clear that students who came to the Foundation would be challenged to come to terms about both faith and practice. For the morning Forum Hour he spoke on "Asking the Right Questions," hoping "to encourage," as a reporter put it, "the curiosity of the students so that our existence will be more meaningful." The key questions had to do with God, the universe, the nature of humankind, and one's relationship to other persons, and his focus seems to have been on encouraging students to engage in the search for answers, not necessarily to accept what they had always been taught.

One student remembered at the end of the Martins' tenure that Wesley Foundation was "about the only place" where students could "openly discuss religious, moral, and social matters as well as events in the world situation." Another wrote to Martin about his "rare qualities of vitality and flexibility of thought ... seldom found in youth, much less in your generation." A similar point was made by a student who wrote, "You have a tolerance for ideas; you are willing to examine new ideas honestly and accept or reject them according to their merit." Yet another recognized in him an ability "to communicate with people of various backgrounds and philosophies" that set him apart from his "previous experiences with ministers." "[T]he enigma for me," he wrote, "is to explain how a man of the cloth of an older school of theology has been flexible enough to understand, accept, and communicate with this new generation."

One student couple that was particularly close to the Martins remembered how for them coming to terms with "the fact that the church [was], after all, human" was a difficult process and how they were "fortunate ... to have had your wise counsel to give us insights into the problems and pitfalls of this most important transition." Another couple, with a detailed knowledge of the church from childhood that had led to a degree of disillusionment, thanked them "for making the church relevant and important ... even though we may never again be satisfied with some of its irrelevant forms which we constantly find about us."

The recognition that the church still had relevance, which many students found at the Wesley Foundation, happened in great measure because Martin brought to Fayetteville, along with the knowledge about and commitment to the church as it was, a sense of what it could and should be. Even as he helped to shatter some naive myths about the church, he responded to the idealism of youth with his own. In Arkansas in the late 1950s and early 1960s this meant, above all, directly confronting questions about race.

In 1960 the Wesley Foundation Council from Fayetteville worked at the state level to support holding the state Methodist Student Movement Conference at Philander Smith College in Little Rock, a historically and predominantly black Methodist school. The students from Fayetteville also voted in favor of a resolution favoring integration of Hendrix College in Conway, the other Methodist school in the state, which was all white except possibly for an occasional international student. They apparently also helped approve a resolution supporting "the sit-in demonstrations held in Little Rock and other cities." That same year, as a member of the Board of Trustees of Hendrix College, Martin advised his colleagues that, although they supported a statement to continue a segregated admissions policy because that was what Methodists in Arkansas wanted, "Methodist college youth of the state lean much more toward favoring integration than the Church constituency in general."

In the spring of 1961 a group of Methodist ministers led by the Reverend Jim Beal went before the Hendrix board of trustees to present a paper encouraging an open admissions policy. A motion to accept the statement from the ministers was amended to include a promise to continue "vigorous Christian consideration of both the general question and the specific suggestions presented in the paper," with Martin seconding the motion. Immediately after receiving a copy of the board minutes, Martin wrote Dr. Keith Petersen, a professor at the university in Fayetteville, regarding a proposed letter to the Hendrix trustees from the Commission on Christian Social Concerns of Central Methodist Church in Fayetteville, which Petersen chaired. The committee, he suggested, might express concern "over the multitude of problems" related to race relationships, affirm "that our church [-] related institutions have more than ordinary opportunities and responsibilities under the Christian Gospel for leadership in this difficult yet highly significant area of human relationships," express gratification at the Board's decision "to continue vigorous Christian consideration

of this vital and important matter," and "pledge ... our whole-hearted cooperation in carrying out this resolution as rapidly as possible."

In April 1961 the dean of men and a group of students from Philander Smith spent a weekend as guests of the Foundation in Fayetteville. They arrived on a Saturday afternoon and participated in a drop-in party at the student center that night. On Sunday they presented the program at the Forum Hour in the morning, participated in "an informal discussion of the sit-in and kneel-in demonstrations" that afternoon, and then that evening told the Philander Smith story by means of a panel at the Central Church Family Night activities.

For several years thirty or so students from the Foundation worked "as assistants in the teaching program" for elementary pupils at the black Lincoln School in Fayetteville. As a result children received "more individual attention." In science junior and senior university students used "the experimental method" as they worked with the children "in small groups ... to learn more by doing and participating" and to prepare for science fair participation. Other university students helped in the physical fitness program and with arts and crafts, where the children engaged in "group activities such as sketching, writing, [and] finger painting." One student remembered having parties at the school for the children, and there was also "a supper and talent show featuring students and community members" at Central Church, which resulted in a swastika being painted "on the front door of the Center." All of these efforts to build bridges across racial lines in Fayetteville Martin "attended, supported[,] and allowed." Martin also undoubtedly gave his whole-hearted support to the Wesley Foundation Student Council as it worked to push the university administration to integrate the school at all levels.

Racial concerns reached a confrontational stage in the 1962–1963 school year. In June of 1962 Jim Loudermilk, who had served as president of the Foundation in 1957–1958, his last year

and Martin's first at the university, returned as associate director with a degree from Perkins School of Theology at SMU and pastoral experience . If anything, "thanks to a mother who grew up picking cotton with Black children in the Arkansas River bottom land," he was even less patient with racism and the lack of progress at the university in this area than was Martin. As the handful of black students at the university found the United Methodist student center open to them, it was not long before they gathered there to plan "an informational picket line/demonstration in front of the library" about discriminatory housing policies. Loudermilk personally participated, and in recalling the event decades later, he remembered that one person who was not pleased when he gave him a leaflet was Frank Broyles, a dedicated Methodist layman who, after coming to the university in late 1957 to coach football shortly after Martin's arrival, was already a leader at Central Methodist Church. Two days after the demonstration Loudermilk and Martin found themselves in a meeting with the district superintendent, John Bayliss, whom Loudermilk remembers as questioning his level of maturity for university work, with the apparent implication that he should be given another appointment.

Soon, under the influence of "a small group" in Central Methodist Church that Martin referred to as "extremely conservative," both he and Loudermilk were facing a recommendation from a committee at the church to the Wesley Foundation Personnel Committee that they "not be returned, and that if they were, ... they be excluded from appearing in the pulpit of the church." The Foundation committee at first recommended that only Martin be allowed to continue for his last year, before mandatory retirement set in, but then reversed itself, and Loudermilk was reappointed to the Foundation for the 1963–1964 school year as director with Martin as his associate. Noting that he and Jim had been "'working quietly and by persuasion,'" for integration of public facilities in Fayetteville, Martin labeled their joint efforts as "very modest activities on behalf of better relations

between the races" and blasted those who opposed them as thinking that the Church "'exists to approve and make holy everything that the society in which we live does.'"

When Martin retired from the Foundation a student wrote that "of all the factors that kept [him] interested, the most important was your aggressive, but scholarly approach to the question of civil rights." Another said that "the main thing" that she remembered were "the questions and discussions on race and different religions." Probably the struggles over race were one of the things in mind when a student referred to "[y]our integrity in the midst of mendacity, your courage in the face of opposition, and your faith despite disillusioning experiences...." They were undoubtedly in the thinking of another student, who, after noting Martin's ability to "keep up with and accept inevit[a]ble social changes," wrote, "[Y]ou have the courage and audacity to say and do things that need to be said and done but are not popular with the public. Even though you are adept at smoothing over indignation, you have proven repe[a]tedly that yours is not a ministry of public opinion." On the occasion of Martin's retirement, the state director for the Arkansas Methodist Student Movement, George Tanner, acknowledged his leadership in encouraging other ministers with students to be responsible leaders. He thanked him for his "prophetic statements and stands concerning Civil Rights" and for his role in "pushing and pulling [the Movement] into the intense struggle of being relevant both to the Gospel and to the college community."

The need for more adequate facilities was obvious to the Martins and to many others when they arrived in Fayetteville to find an old house and an incipient building fund already in place. The drive for a new center was an endeavor into which they put considerable financial resources of their own and a great amount of time, as both of them were active members of the building committee. By the end of the 1958–1959 school year Martin could report that the necessary committees had been formed, a contest

among architecture students at the university "for the best preliminary plan" had been completed, and Warren Segraves of Fayetteville had been chosen as the architect.

In a 1960 article that was part of a well-timed series in the *Arkansas Methodist* on church work with university students, Martin called for "the facilities, the encouragement, and the spiritual leadership that [would] command [students'] whole-hearted respect and allegiance," reminding his readers that in the "thrilling and sometimes terrifying experience" of entering college, a student was taking his "first major step toward becoming a mature and responsible adult" and was finding "[f]amiliar patterns of religious thought ... challenged both in the class room and in campus activities." At such a time, he wrote, "we should not think of Wesley Foundation as an adjunct of the Church, a sort of 'arm of the Church' extended in something of a patronizing way toward the 'dear young people' in college, but as the Church itself involved in one of the most important salients of the long battleline [*sic*] against the forces of modern materialism."

The following spring the groundbreaking ceremony for the Chapel of the Cross took place. With his careful attention to detail, Martin arranged for the soil to be loosened in advance, so that the "old people taking part in the ceremony could break the ground, without breaking their back." In an interview he stated that the altar, not the pulpit, would "be the focal point within the sanctuary," the "emphasis" being "upon a community of worshippers, rather than upon the clergy as separate from the laity." Martin expressed the hope "that this chapel may become a powerful witness to the relevance of the Christian faith in the total life of the University community."

Students who arrived in the fall of 1962 were advised that the new chapel, which was nearing completion, would be open from seven A.M. till eleven P.M. "for moments of personal dedication and prayer," that there would be student-led worship early in the morning and late in the afternoon, and that on Thursday nights

there would be services led by Martin and his new associate director, Jim Loudermilk, in cooperation with campus ministers of other denominations. The chapel was formally dedicated in November by Bishop W. Kenneth Pope, with help from several bishops from nearby states and church leaders in Arkansas; a news story described it as a "new ecumenical chapel for all campus denominational groups active in the National Student Christian Federation."

Completion and dedication of the second unit of the new center happily coincided with Martin's last year before retirement as a Methodist minister. On May 24, 1964, A.W. and Lloyd ended their official relationship with the Wesley Foundation. They were honored with a ceremony of recognition that included the presentation of a scrapbook of letters, frequently quoted above, that had come "from former Wesley Foundation members now scattered all over the world" and the announcement that the library at the Methodist Center had been named in their honor. Undoubtedly students enjoyed trading stories about some of A.W.'s endearing, and perhaps not so endearing, habits and idiosyncrasies: the wicked grin, the ever-present camera ready to take a candid picture at unexpected moments, pet expressions like "howzat" (how's that?) or "enlighten the brethren," the ability to awaken from an apparent snooze at a council meeting and know exactly what had been said all along, the prayers that sometimes went longer than the allotted time, and problems with fire building before early morning worship.

It was more than fitting that this recognition was a joint one that included Lloyd. Some students addressed personal letters to her as well as to her husband for the scrapbook. Besides hosting social events, preparing meals for council meetings, contributing in a substantial financial way to the new center, and serving on the building committee, she took a personal interest in the lives of many students, including both domestic and international students who saw her as almost a second mother. She served as advisor for

the Wesley Players drama group, even on occasion directing plays herself. The group was not afraid to take on important social issues, presenting, for example, an early play by Eugene O'Neill on abortion, which dealt with a classic "town and gown" conflict: a star athlete at a large university gets a town girl pregnant and persuades her to have an abortion.

The close of the 1963–1964 school year at the University of Arkansas, the end of Martin's tenure at the Wesley Foundation, and the annual session of the North Arkansas Conference all came within a few days of one another. So Martin soon headed for the annual conference, one that would be an almost new experience: for the first time in almost half a century he would receive no appointment.

A year and a half as volunteer workers at Lydia Patterson Institute, a Methodist secondary school in El Paso, followed for A.W. and Lloyd, to be succeeded in turn by real retirement at last in Springdale. In 1968, shortly after observing the uniting conference of the Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren in Dallas to form the United Methodist Church, Martin suffered a disabling stroke and died almost five years later in 1973. He is buried in the cemetery of his hometown, Pea Ridge.

Shortly after his death, a successor director named Martin "the modern pioneer in Wesley Foundation work in Arkansas." It was not just a matter of fund raising for all the foundations in the state, Lewis Chesser said, "He was the real driving power behind the movement." Another, long-time director in the state, George Tanner, whose initial years coincided with Martin's time, remembered the regular gatherings of the Foundation directors from around the state as times of debate and "talk[ing] together about any and everything." Martin was always present, always vocal, and always willing to push his colleagues to witness for a "cutting-edge" position on race and war. "He was our leader and he [set] the tone for our work with students and faculty," he wrote.

"He not only enriched our [lives]; he was instrumental in keeping most of us in [t]he Methodist Church."

In an article that he wrote for the *Arkansas Methodist* just past the half-way point in his career as a campus minister and a few months before his seventieth birthday, Martin described "[many] college students" as "still prompted by idealistic and unselfish motives ... sometimes critical of what appears to them to be a ready willingness on the part of the leaders of the church to accept and conform to identically the same standards of achievement as govern secular institutions." From such students, he said, the church should recruit its future ministers and other workers, who, he hoped, would "have something of the sensitive soul of an Amos, the courage of a Jer[e]miah, and the flaming eloquence of a John the Baptist." Some, who as students and fellow workers knew him and struggled at his side, would not hesitate to say that the old man had come close to describing himself.

SOURCES AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Major written sources for this study include correspondence, minutes, and copies of *The Wesleyan* and *The Circuit Rider* in the files of the Wesley Foundation at the University of Arkansas, which were kindly made available by the Rev. Gregg Taylor and his assistant, Robbye Bland; a collection of letters from students with whom the Martins worked, "A Memorial Presented to Dr. and Mrs. A.W. Martin," in May 1964, in the author's possession; the *Arkansas Methodist*, 1957–1964; and the University of Arkansas student newspaper, the *Arkansas Traveler*, 1957–1965. Also helpful were the *Arkansas Gazette* for December 1962; April, May, 1963; November, December, 1964; and May 1965 and an unofficial student paper, *'ScuseMe*, November 1964–January 1965. Betty Bradfield, the church historian for Central Church, graciously provided access to Quarterly Conference Minutes and church news letters.

For information from persons who worked with A.W. and Lloyd, I am indebted above all to Jim Loudermilk, who knew the Martins first as a student, then as associate director, and finally as director of the Wesley Foundation, and his wife Homera, and to Don Franks and his wife, Elizabeth. Don also furnished copies of correspondence with Martin and with their son Raymond Martin, as well as other letters. Other former students also made valuable comments: Roland and Regina Roth, Janita and Jack Hoskyn, Ed and Pat Matthews, Taylor and Mary Prewitt, Bill Boyer, and Lynn Lindsey. Ministers Sam Teague, Lewis Chesser, George Tanner, R. E. L. Bearden, Jr., and Jim Randle, Jr, were also helpful, as was Walter W. Davis, a former choir director at Central United Methodist Church, Fayetteville.

Other written sources included minutes of the Hendrix College Board of Trustees for 1960; letters of A.W. Martin to his children, courtesy of Betty Anderson, Little Rock, and Sue Emerson, Scottsdale, AZ; an undated leaflet, "The Chapel of the Cross"; James E. Lester, Jr. *Hendrix College: A Centennial History* (Conway, AR: Hendrix Centennial Committee, 1984); Nancy Britton, *Two Centuries of Methodism in Arkansas, 1800–2000* (Little Rock: August House, 2000); Walter N. Vernon, *Methodism in Arkansas, 1816–1976* (Little Rock: Joint Committee For the History of Arkansas Methodism, 1976); Libby Ingram, "Service Takes Varied Forms for Churchman," *Arkansas Democrat Magazine*, July 10, 1968, 8.

A word of thanks for assistance goes to Amanda Moore, head librarian, Bailey Library, Hendrix College, Conway, Arkansas; Judy Robinson, former Special Collections librarian at Hendrix College; Mauzel Beal, archivist of the Winfred Polk United Methodist Archives, Hendrix College; Anne Prichard, Special Collections librarian, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville; Joyce Peterson, interloan librarian at Oklahoma City University; and library staff at the Main Library, Central Arkansas Library System,

Little Rock, at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, and at Arkansas Tech University, Russellville.

This article is based on a longer manuscript, with full documentation, which may be found in the Polk United Methodist Archives, Hendrix College.

THE WASHINGTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY: THE BEGINNINGS

MATTHEW KIRKPATRICK

At the Fifty-fourth Annual Meeting of the Washington County Historical Society those in attendance heard a delightful presentation for Dr. Robert E. L. Bearden, who received the Distinguished Citizen Award for 2004. Our outgoing president, Ann Sugg, asked me to peruse the dusty volumes of the Society's publication, *Flashback*, in order to ascertain the origins of the Society. The project quickly snowballed, and I decided to share some of my findings with the members.

Considering I had been an intern for the Society less than a week, and I had only lived in Arkansas for four months, I had little knowledge of who Archibald Yell and the Tebbetts family were, much less W. J. Lemke, Tom Feathers, and the other founding members of the Society. I quickly discovered that this Society was founded upon the desire to preserve and record local and area history for future generations. It was through the determination and foresight of a handful of men and women that this Society was founded and has continued to persevere for over fifty years.

As many long-time members know, the Society was founded in March of 1951. The first meeting was held on February 18, 1951, in the student center of the Lutheran Church. Rev. G. W. Thompson gave a presentation titled "Pioneer Schools," and Alvin Seamster gave an account of the history of Washington County and presented several family heirlooms to those in attendance.

Matthew Kirkpatrick is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville. He grew up in Pampa, Texas, and has a B.A. in English and history from Hardin-Simmons University and an M.A. in history from Midwestern State University, Wichita Falls, Texas. His goal is to teach history on the college level. Currently he is an intern with the Washington County Historical Society.

Charter membership into the Society was open to anyone that had a zeal for the history of Washington County. Anyone who was interested in local history and preservation was strongly encouraged to cut a check for $2.00 to W. J. Lemke and in return one would receive a beautiful membership card that had a map showing Lovely County 1827.

W. J. Lemke became not only the first editor of *Flashback*, but also the first president of the Society. Lemke, in the pages of the journal he edited, comes alive once again in his determination for preservation as a driving force behind the Society's inception and involvement within the community. Lemke and the other founding members of the Society were not content to merely write stories and reminisce about the way things were. They took a proactive role in the community through essay contests for school children, pilgrimages to area landmarks, and, of course, the annual banquet.

The first reference to the Society-sponsored public school essay contest was in the very first issue of *Flashback*. This seemed to indicate just how important the members viewed their roles in the community and how seriously they took educating children within the county on topics of local history. The Society was anxious to secure historical material from the surrounding towns so that students would have ample material to write on. The later publications of *Flashback* noted that prizes of $5, $10 and $15 would be awarded to the top three papers submitted to the Society. This was certainly a king's ransom to a young historian in 1951. In the following issues the winners had their essays printed in *Flashback*; this too, must have been quite a thrill for school children— to be paid authors and to have their names in print!

One of the first pilgrimages the Society took was to historic Evergreen Cemetery in Fayetteville. The April meeting of the Society was held on Sunday the 15th, 1951, at the cemetery. In the *Flashback* for that month Lemke provided a map of the historic graves that they visited on the trip; thus anyone who was interested

could easily locate the graves of some of Fayetteville's most distinguished citizens. This event was conducted by Dr. Harrison Hale and, of course, W. J. Lemke. *Flashback* throughout the 1950s attested to the popularity of these excursions to various points of interests. The Society went to Elkhorn Tavern on March 9, 1952, in observance of the 90th anniversary of the battle of Pea Ridge. They toured many old villages and hamlets: Maguire Town, Evansville, Cane Hill, Dutch Mills, Prairie Grove, Cincinnati, and other old communities. One of my favorite articles from this period was when the Society decided to return to the Evergreen Cemetery. They went during the Memorial Day holiday to place flowers and flags on both Union and Confederate graves.

The high point of the year was the annual meeting, and the very first meeting was no exception. The banquet was held at the Washington Hotel in Fayetteville on January 15, 1951. Instead of a guest speaker Lemke and the other officers of the Society decided that every member of the Society present would be allowed to relate his or her favorite historical topic or personal reminiscence! (Apparently allowing the members a chance to tell a story was very popular, because they did it again in 1952.)

The secretary-treasurer, Tom Feathers, also gave his report to the members at the dinner. The report showed the Society had a grand total of 179 members for the year. Feathers reported that all bills were paid and a small balance was left in the treasury: there were receipts for 174 membership dues at $2 per family, or $348. The expenditures for printing editing and postage of the *Flashback* came to exactly $347.20. This left the Society in the black by 80¢ for the first year of its existence.

Needless to say, things have changed somewhat since 1951. Our treasurer, A.D. Poole, has more than 80¢ in the bank. The membership dues have also risen with the times. Yet the foundations on which the Society was founded fifty-four years ago remain unchanged. Our members are still very active in the preservation of local history; I am specifically mindful of Dee Dee

Lamb and the formation of the Heritage School. Yes, even though times have changed, the objectives of recording and preserving history and active community involvement remained unchanged. It is my hope that the Society continues to live up to the high standards set by the founders. Robert Bearden, Walter Lemke, and Tom Feathers founded more than a little historical society in Northwest Arkansas; they built an organization dedicated to the preservation of the rich history of our state and our nation.

ROBERT E. L. BEARDEN JR. REMEMBERS

Editor's note: The Washington County Historical Society honored Dr. Robert E. L. Bearden Jr. with its Distinguished Citizen award at the annual meeting of the society on October 3, 2004. Dr. Bearden was one of the signatories to the organization's articles of incorporation in 1958. His interest in history is reflected in his record as a member of the Arkansas State History Commission in 1962–1966, permanent membership in the Arkansas Historical Association, first president of the Little Rock chapter of the Arkansas Archeological Association, once president of the board of the Museum of Science and History in Little Rock, member of the Civil War Round Table, and continuing membership in WCHS. In introducing Dr. Bearden, Hugh Kincaid spoke of his service on the National Commission on Archives and History of the Methodist church. The History Room of First United Methodist Church in Little Rock is dedicated to Dr. Bearden. His alma mater, Henderson State University, named him a distinguished alumnus in 1987. He is also a graduate of the Divinity School of Duke University. A life member of the Hendrix College Board of Trustees, he holds an honorary doctor of divinity degree from that institution.

Following the luncheon Dr. Bearden spoke about his years in Fayetteville with Gretchen Gearhart and Ann Sugg. Below is a transcript of that conversation.

GG: Dr. Bearden, I'm delighted to have this opportunity to visit with you and to talk about the very early years of the Washington County Historical Society. Tell me, when did you live in Fayetteville?

RB: 1955 to1960. I came as minister of the Central Methodist Church. We lived in a new parsonage just behind the church. We had two children, a daughter, Claire, and a son, Nelson.

GG: Had they been born when you moved here?

RB: Yes, they were junior high and elementary school children. And that was in the days when in Fayetteville you walked to school. That was nice.

GG: You were a board member of the Washington County Historical Society, weren't you?

RB: Yes. Oh, no, not a board member. I belonged to it.

GG: Did you have an office in the Washington County Historical Society?

RB: I don't think I did, but apparently I was on the incorporating committee. I can remember Dr. Virgil Jones, and he was the grandfather of the Arkansas Historical Society. He was the first editor when the paper finally came along, a wonderful man. I remember the year it started; it was 1947 and I had an article in it. I also had one article in the *Flashback*, in 1957. It was mimeographed in those days.

GG: What were some of the Society's activities when you were here?

RB: It held monthly meetings. I can't remember where they met. And then twice a year we had tours. I remember one—we went to Greathouse Springs and Elm Springs and the cemetery there in the Methodist churchyard and several other places. And this is a very interesting thing to me about Washington County in relation to the Methodists; in 1833 the Missouri Conference of the Methodist Church met right on the Indian Territory line but in Washington County. It's over south and west of the town of Lincoln, down Highway 59, and then off to the right. In that year, 1833, the Missouri Session met there, and we think it's because they were in charge of the Indian missions in Indian Territory and they were nearby, you see. So they came in there and had a session and Bishop Joshua Soule was the presiding bishop. It was called Salem Campground or Mountain Springs. The Methodist Church has put a marker there now, a nice granite stone showing where it was. There's a nice spring, a beautiful valley, it's about two miles

off Highway 59 west. That was very interesting. The reason I said that was because that was one of the places we went when we had trips. When I saw your questions, I just wondered whether I could do much good or not. I couldn't remember much of the things that happened. That was so long ago. Mr.[W. J.] Lemke was really the guiding light of this organization in the early years. He knew what to do and was enthusiastic and very much interested.. He was a wonderful man and a great historian and a research historian. He tried to be a curmudgeon but couldn't make it. He was really a loving, caring man. And Dr. Bob Logan, Robert Logan, had a great interest in this area. We were neighbors, across the street. We did a lot of visiting about our interests. I want to mention Ed McCuistion of Prairie Grove. He was strongly instrumental in getting the state to make the battlefield a state park. He knew this county like nobody else. He took me all around, and we saw the Morrow house before it was moved. And the other one I think of was the Reverend William Sherman, who was born in Elm Springs just after the Civil War and was living in Fayetteville in retirement alone; his wife had died. He was a walking encyclopedia. I wish we'd had oral history in those days, that we could have just talked to him. He knew the early circumstances. And can I tell you this, I felt like I'd like it to be in here. All through the years since we lived here I have been sending anything I run across in research or read about Washington County. I've sent just little things to be put in the archives. The most interesting one was that there is a Confederate cemetery in Okalona, Mississippi just south of Tupelo about twelve miles. There is a big Confederate cemetery in that town, over one thousand graves. One of my great-grandfathers is buried there, and that's the reason Ellen and I went to see his grave. He was a soldier with the 14th Arkansas Infantry Regiment, which was mustered in, no gathered, in Yellville in Marion County and, you see, when they started out they got more than one thousand men

lined up. They had nothing, they were not soldiers. They went out in search of the Confederate Army; they wanted to join and they found the town where General McCulloch was in the countryside nearby. It was over here, right near Fayetteville. It was a large army, so they stopped at War Eagle and had kind of a regrouping. They went over looking for the army. They found it and they took them right in. There were mustered in as the 14th Infantry Regiment. That was about two weeks before Pea Ridge, and these boys went into battle without any kind of training or experience. This was typical of the early Southern soldier. They were in the thick of things. I mentioned that regiment and my ancestor to Dr. Bill Shea, who wrote the history of Pea Ridge, and he said, "You have every right to be proud of them. They were a very brave, active regiment." They fought at Lee Town, which is at the western end of the battle. The brigade commander was a Frenchman from Louisiana, Brig. Gen. Louis Hebert. He was captured there, taken into captivity. They all were, of course, badly demoralized, beaten, and they all retreated south of Fayetteville, and that was their first experience. They went over to the state of Mississippi on orders to try to get to Shiloh, but they didn't make it in time. And Gen. Albert Sidney Johnston was killed at Shiloh and Beauregard became the commanding general. He went down to Tupelo with the men. That's where these burials were made. They created a makeshift hospital there. They had literally thousands of wounded and sick at a place called Ada Gates College, a girls' school, and they built other buildings to accommodate the men. My great-grandfather was there and he died, we don't know exactly how, on the 6th of June 1862, and we found his grave. The reason for all this fooling around is that I found a number of Washington County boys' graves. I thought that might not even be known by Washington County so I copied the names and they were all identified as from Cane Hill, and some were unknown as is always true but some had names. And

then there was a big stone that dominates the area–the Confederacy—that was built to commemorate a young chaplain, a Cumberland Presbyterian minister from Cane Hill, the Reverend James S. Haygood, A. B. He was killed and the men had a stone made that totally dominates the whole thing, He's honored highly for his value to the troops and their love of him. I just thought you'd have that somewhere and I'm sure that some people would like to see if they have any names. I sent that to Dr. Walter Brown, and he sent it to you for your files and also some other things. That was most interesting. The reason that happened is that all of these men that were at Pea Ridge were down in the Van Buren area and they were ordered, out of Richmond, I believe, to the Corinth area because they knew the Yankees were coming down in a large number to Pittman's Landing and moving in and that's where the battle took place. After that the troops retreated down to Tupelo. Makes one wonder how many Washington County boys there are today out there in some far off place unknown to their families. These are terrible times.

GG: I'm sure our readers will be very interested in that story.

RB: They put that notice in the Flashback, just a little jot about it several years ago.

GG: What else was happening in Fayetteville while you lived here? Those were interesting years.

RB: Yes, they were and very important years and I'm trying to think if I know of any great single event.

GG: Is that when the high school was integrated?

RB. No, it had been done before them. It was the first in Arkansas to do it, I believe. Maybe there was another small school. So that was already done and very peacefully too. Of course we don't have many blacks here, but anybody who lived through that volatile time knows it was tricky even in Fayetteville, but they did it well.

I just thought of a funny story. I just saw the name of Professor [F. S.] Root, superintendent of schools here in the early part of the 20th century. He decided to build a new high school, and he built it. It's long since been turned into a children's school [Hillcrest Towers, which is low-income housing, now stands on the site.] down at the end of–what's that street that comes into town directly from the highway from the south above the City Hospital?

GG: School Street?

RB: I believe that's it. Mr. Root was kind of an old time conservative. He stood in front of that building and it looked so huge and he said, "They'll never fill it." [Note: The original building was erected in 1908 and additions made in 1925 and 1927.] He should have seen it when they finally moved out. I thought that story was really cute.

GG: If he could see Fayetteville today, he wouldn't believe it.

RB: I'll say. He really would not. Fayetteville was such a pleasant, pleasant place in those years, really unique. I think Jim Workman was right when said to me,"You will go to other churches, and have some good ones, but you'll never have one like Fayetteville. Once you taste that liquor, all else is bootleg." It was a small town and yet very sophisticated with a lot of intellectual people and events. We had some wonderful opportunities, as we always do, for music and lectures and university events. I always said it was the best town in Arkansas for free entertainment because the university usually puts them on at no cost. Mr. [Frank] Broyles came to Fayetteville during that time. He came with Barbara and they had those three boys and twin girls and he became a member of our church. They came from Columbia, Missouri–he was coach at Missouri— and they suddenly became a part of this town and then this state. I remember his first season, I believe it was 1957. They lost the first four games—I believe that is correct —and the gloom, you

could cut it with a knife. It was bad, but from then on they won the rest of the games and after that had some great, great seasons.

AS: Do you remember how many members there were of our church?

RB: Yes, there were about nine hundred. Now I think it's three thousand. I'm trying to think if I can remember some of the really old people in the county. Mrs. Greathouse comes to mind. She lived near the springs, which is just a mile or two from Johnson. The old home is still there, a very beautiful 19th century home and she was the last of the grande dames of Fayetteville.

AS: Do you remember Tom Feathers?

RB: Oh, yes. We were good friends, and he was one of the incorporators.

GG: Did you know Dr. Ellis? [E. F. Ellis]

RB: Very well, a wonderful man. Their old, big home, you may know, was next to the theater, down next to the courthouse. They had a large home there, a very early one. It was built a long time ago. He remained very active. He was Susan Lesh's grandfather, I think.

AS: Yes, Dr. Ruth [Lesh] was his daughter.

RB: And Miss Elizabeth [Ellis].

AS: Did you know Elizabeth just died a few months ago?

RB: Yes. She really had a long life.

AS: Her mind stayed active pretty much all her life. She could remember things, and she was always right.

GG: She was interested in history. She would call me at my job to correct things she saw in the quarterly [*Arkansas Historical Quarterly*]. For instance, a historian who was talking about the Civil War in Fayetteville spoke of Mount Sequoyah, and she said that it was East Mountain in those days.

RB: It was bought by the Methodists about 1922 and turned into the Assembly grounds.

AS: I have heard that all the Methodist Assembly Grounds were named for Indian chiefs. Sequoyah was not a chief, but he was a leader.

RB: I never thought of that. That sounds reasonable, doesn't it. The big one in the southeast near Ashville, North Carolina, is called Junaluska [a Cherokee chief].

AS: Some people have tried to make it that Sequoyah actually came here, through here on the Trail of Tears. Some of the Trail of Tears people did, but I don't think Sequoyah was one of them.

RB: You know there's a Trail of Tears marker here. Where is it?

AS: It's down on Sixth Street, this street that we're on now.

GG: Back to Fayetteville–who were the movers and shakers in town? Who was the mayor?

RB: The Lewis family. They were certainly bankers and Mr. Ralph Lewis had a large hardware store. His son Heydon was a friend and personal companion of mine. The Campbell-Bell store was in the hands of Clint Walden. He was quite a prominent guy. Hal Douglas, editor of the Northwest Arkansas Times and his wife, Betty, Mrs. Fulbright's daughter. And John Barnhill, the football coach, was a man who was very active in the community. He was not just a coach. The Hathcocks, doctors, and the Meltons, also doctors, who were very much into active affairs in Fayetteville.

AS: L. L. Baxter.

RB: Yes, that's right. Arkansas Western Gas. He was a big one. They called that lawyers' street "Smokey Row." It was from the courthouse straight up to the square.

GG: Center?

RB: Yes. Most of the attorneys were in those buildings. The two leading hotels in the city were the Mountain Inn and the Washington Hotel. It was a very old hotel on the corner of the square, the southwest, and it was a girls' dorm for many years, wasn't it?

AS: For a while, yes, when there were more students than the university could house.

RB: And then it was a nice hotel. The Mountain Inn was more prominent and bigger.

GG: Where did the city fathers gather to have breakfast or coffee and talk things over?

RB: I don't know of any place, but it's often true in small Arkansas towns that they all get together.

GG: But the square was still vibrant in those days, wasn't it?

RB: Yes, very much so. I'm glad we had this visit. It's hard for me to pull up these memories now. I could have done it a few years ago better.

GG: This has been a great privilege for me. I'd like to ask you what is your full name?

RB: Robert–you'll love this–Edward Lee Bearden, Jr. My grandfather was a kind of wannabe Confederate soldier and he named his first son, my dad, and then they named me Robert E. Lee.

GG: And where and when were you born?

RB: Conway in 1915. My dad was a minister and he was at Conway as what is called a presiding elder.

GG: What was your mother's name?

RB: Her name was Frances, Mary Frances Davis. She was from a little town up in the Ozarks called Big Flat. It was in Searcy County and now it's in the extreme southwest corner of Baxter County. My dad was raised very near the Buffalo River.

GG: Do you have brothers and sisters?

RB: I was one of seven. They're all gone now. I was the youngest one. Every two years my parents had a child just regular as clockwork. Twelve years passed with no child and I know my dad was relieved and thought, "Thank goodness we got that over," and then I came along. I think he was tired of kids. He didn't show a

lot of enthusiasm. My mother, course, did. We had a lovely family.

AS: Did you move a lot when you were growing up? Was your father transferred?

RB: When I was a child we lived in Conway, Blytheville, and Arkadelphia. They were middle-sized towns.

GG: What is your wife's name?

RB: Ellen Lucille Nelson. She was born and raised in Russellville.

GG: And you now live in Little Rock?

RB: Yes.

GG: In your own home?

RB: Yes, we have a little home in Yosemite Valley. We lost our older son in 1980. But our daughter is here today, and she lives in Dallas. Well, if that's all I guess this is it. I thank you very much. You all have been so very, very nice.

GG: And we thank you. Goodbye, and have a safe trip home.

BOOK REVIEW

The Journal of J. L. Dickson. By Joseph Lawrence Dickson. Edited by W. J. Lemke with an introduction by Rowena McCord Galloway. (Fayetteville, Arkansas, Washington County Historical Society Bulletin Series #15, 1956. Foreword, index, and added genealogical information. Pp. 30. $12.00)

The Journal of J. L. Dickson is a narrative by a prominent early Fayetteville citizen, Joseph Lawrence Dickson. In his journal Dickson records the regular happenings of Fayetteville, including the weather, social events, elections, court proceedings, financial transactions, and even who preached at the town's churches. Dickson's journal provides information to add depth and color to any reader's or scholar's understanding of Fayetteville in the ante-bellum years, from around 1854 to the early 1860s.

The weather is a constant theme in Dickson's journal. Every day he records the weather, be it warm, windy, rainy, or cloudy there is always a mention of conditions and how they affect the local economy and the people of the town.

Another prominent theme in the journal is religion. The reader can see that Dickson was a very religious man. Dickson regularly documents his church attendance. In an early entry he records that he was received as a member of the Presbyterian Church and baptized by Rev. J. F. Green. Dickson makes particular note that he now has renewed confidence that he will be "raised into life everlasting." Dickson mentions more instances of home worship with his wife, Sarah, after his baptism. A regular churchgoer, he critiques the sermons he hears. It appears that Dickson went to several of the services and sermons of the Reverend Mr. Hackett, Episcopal, whom Dickson called "a very gentlemanly man" and whose sermons were of "good discourse." Judging by the regular mention of attendance

at the services and sermons of the Reverend Mr. Hackett that Joseph Dickson and his family were Episcopalians and that they were one of the pioneer families of the fledgling St. Paul's Parish in the ante-bellum years of Fayetteville. Dickson notes that he attended the consecration of St. Paul's Church by Bishop Freeman on October 29, 1854.

In the entry dated July 4, 1854, Dickson proclaims the importance of the Independence Day holiday; of this "great holy day" he says that it "is a day sacred to every true patriot and lover of civil and religious liberty." With this statement it is hard to tell whether Joseph Dickson would have ended up on the Northern or Southern side of the great turning point that was approaching. Dickson notes that Independence Day is also the day when Arkansas College will hold its annual commencement ceremonies.

Dickson, being the leading merchant in Fayetteville, had to deal with the issue of slavery in the ante-bellum years in the South. There are only two mentions in the *Journal* of a slave sale. Dickson records what is apparently the sale at auction of a slave named Sam, with the price and term of interest on the sale. The second instance is more detailed. Dickson tells of selling Peggy, who had been given to him by his father. Dickson makes note that he was selling her on her own request and that he disliked selling her and losing such a valuable servant. Dickson also records in his journal the births of his servants' children. In the *Journal*, it is unclear whether Dickson supported the institution of slavery.

Dickson chronicles the deaths of prominent members of the town such as Sophia Sawyer, along with the arrival of John Ross, principal chief of the Cherokee, and his own regular fishing trips with Jonas M. Tebbetts. He mentions the outcomes of local elections and his duties with the local government.

W. J. Lemke, the editor of this text and of the Bulletin Series, added a section of genealogical information on the

Dickson line "because of the fascinating history of the Dicksons and their prominence in Washington and Benton counties." This text not only adds details to the ante-bellum history of Fayetteville, but also is a valuable source of genealogical information on one of the great pioneer families of Fayetteville.

Copies are available for purchase in the Washington County Historical Society's bookstore in the Headquarters House at 118 East Dickson Street in Fayetteville.

Garrick D. Hildebrand

Index to Volume 54

Ada Gates College, 178
Adams, Bert, 2
Adams, James Allen, 7
Adams, Mettie. *See* Stewart, Mettie
Adams, Ray, 3
Anagost, Mrs. James, 61
Anderson, Mary, 34
Angus, Mary Chapman, 87
Angus, Robert M., 87
Austin, Benjamin D., 27
Austin, Katharin, 27
Autin, James M., 27
Ayers, B. L., 122

Baggett, Maxine, 45
Bagley, Roy, 155–156
Baker, Nathan Larry, 127
Ball, E. J., 5–6
Ball, Gladys, 5–6
Ball, Martin L., 110
Banks, Carolyn, rev., 55–58, 95–99
Barnhill, John, 182
Barrow, Clyde, 55–58
Bartholemew, Bill, 43
Barton, L. E., 119, 121
Baxter, L. L., 182
Bayliss, John, 163
Beal, Jim, 161
Bearden, Claire, 175, 184
Bearden, Ellen, 177
Bearden, Nelson, 175, 184
Bearden, Robert E. L. 171, 175, 175–184
Beatty, Elbert, 61
Beauchamp, Harvey, 112
Beauregard, P. G. T., 178
Bell, Charity T., 33
Bell, Charles T., 30
Bell, Mary, 27
Bell, Mary E., 30, 33
Bell, Luther, M., 24, 26, 27, 29, 31, 33, 35
Bell, Saran, 30
Bell, T. M., 30
Bell, Vincel, 137
Benbrook, James, 30, 31
Benbrook, Mahala, 27, 30
Benbrook, Nancy, 30, 31
Benbrook, Polley, 24
Benbrook, Rebecca, 30, 31
Bennett, Jean, 133
Berry, Mary, 40
Beverly Theatre, Prairie Grove, 39
Bieard, Nancy, 23
Bishop, Albert W., 91
Bishop, O. P., 115
Blakeley, Adeline, 93–94
Blakemore, Clara, 41
Blakemore, Grace, 90
Bocquin, Helen Lewis, 88
Bohart, Elizabeth, 87
Bone, David F., 27
Boone, Elizah, 28
Boone, Lacy, 28
Boone, Losson, 28
Boone, Milton, 28
Boone, Thomas Pleasant, 109
Boone, William, 28
Bootright, Chelsey Howard, 101, 103, 104–105, 108–109, 129
Bossmeyer, Henry, 119

Bowen, Bob, 3–4
Bozeman, Francis, 111–112
Brazel, Nola, 27
Brewster, Johnnie, 73
Brewster, Lucile, 141
Bristow, Gordon, photo, 74
Bristow, Mrs. Gordon, photo, 74
Bristow, Hattie, photo, 74
Briscoe, W. M., photo, 119
Brooks, Bernice, 85, 185
Brooks, Willard, 85
Brough, Charles Hillman, 119, 121
Brown, Walter, 179
Broyles, Barbara, 180
Broyles, Ed, 67, 70
Broyles, Frank, 163, 180
Broyles, Mildred, 43, 63, 136, 141
Bruggers, Kenneth, 88
Bruton, Jim, 14
Bryan, William Jennings, 115
Buchanan, Augustus, 28, 33, 34–35, 36, 37
Buchanan, Robert, 25, 28, 31, 33, 37
Buchanon, Mary, 27
Buchanon, Robert, 27
Buckhamon, Robert, 20
Buckhanan, R., 33
Buckhannan, A., 21
Buckhannnon, Robert, 25
Buckhanon, A., 22–23, 24–25
Buckhanon, Polly, 23
Buckhanon, Robert, 22–23, 26, 31
Buckhanon, S., 20
Buie, John, W., 103
Burleson, Dave, 15
Burton, H. H., 121
Butler, John, 146
Campbell, Betsy, 44, 141
Campbell, W. S., 102–106,112, 119, 122–123
Carl, William, 51
Carman, L. A., 61
Carman, Ruetta, 40
Carnahan, A., 31, 34
Carnahan, Benjamin, 34
Carnahan, Wilma, 84
Carnett, Frank W., 122
Cherry, Francis, 14
Chesser, Lewis, 167
Clark, Charles Albert, 20
Clark, Richard Wood, 20
Clark, Thomas Wright, 20
Clark, Walter, 20
Clark, William Wilson, 20
Cloer, John, 14
Cole, Fay, photo, 98
Collier, Grace, 68
Collier, Juliann, 37
Collier, Mel, 68
Connally, Tom, 140
Cook, Emma, 40, 42, 132
Cook, Jefferson Davis, 111
Cook, Magruder, 42
Coots, Charity, 25, 30
Cummings, Bess, 44
Cummings, Douglas, 48
Cummings, Lucy, 44
Cummings, Mary, 41
Cummings, Roberta, 42
Cuningham, John, 24
Cunningham, Lutie, 43

Daily, Atlee, 13
Davidson, B. R., 93
Davis, Ellen Lucille. *See* Bearden, Ellen.
Davis, Mary Frances, 183
Davis, Wiley, 5–6
Dean, Lyford, 69

Dean, Mary, 69
Deatherage, Lyndell, photo, 98
Deatherage, Lytton, photo, 98
Delap, Clyde, 61
Delap, Irene, 136
Delap, Lawrence, 62
Denham, J. E., 112
Deyer, H. J., 119
Dickson, Joseph Lawrence, 185–187
Dickson, Leander, 27
Dickson, Mary, 27
Dickson, Sarah, 185
Distinguished Citizen 2004, 175–184
Doster, Otto, 13
Douglas, Betty, 182
Douglas, Hal, 182
Dovell, Loyd, 132
Drain, Elizabeth, 30, 38
Drain, G. W., 30
Drain, M., 26
Drake, Benjamin, 27
Drake, Jane, 27
Duncan, Mary Evelyn, 126–127
Dunham, Jack, 60
Duty, Jeff, 55–56
Duty, John R., 55–56
Dyer, Irene, 52

E. G. McCormick, Mrs. (Mamie), photo, 74
Eagle, J. D., 109
Eagle, James P., 109
Ellis, E. F., 181
Ellis, Elizabeth, 181
Ernest, Nancy, 28
Evans, Sarah, 27

Falknor, Douglas, 128–129
Faubus, Orville, 14–16
Fayetteville Female Institute, 106
"Fayetteville's First Baptist Church: 150 Years of Serving a Vision," by Tammi Reed Ledbetter, 101–130
Feathers, Tom, 171, 173, 174,181
Fidler, Glenn, 41
Findiesen, Jean, 40, 54
First Baptist Church, Fayetteville, art. on, 101–130; photos, 100, 118
Flanders, J. E., 113
"Flashback Wins Awards," 152
Fletcher, Elizabeth, 24
Fletcher, James, 28, 29, 33
Fletcher, Polley, 23
Fletcher, May, 30
Fletcher, Mary S., 27
Fletcher, Melinda, 26
Foster, J., 33
Foster, John, 27, 30, 31, 38
Foster, L., 29, 31
Foster, Nancy, 27, 30
"Washington County Historical Society, The: The Beginnings," by Matthew Kirkpatrick, 171–174
Four Years' Service in the Southern Army, by Joe M. Scott, revd., 149–151
Francis, Mabel, 135–136
French, J. Wymond, 90
Fulbright, Bill, 77

Gallaway, Irene, 88
Galloway, Rowena McCord, 185
Galloway, Paul V., 158
Garrett, Eula, 67
Gates, G. P., 91

Gearhart, Gretchen, ed., "The Myrtle McCormick Parks Diary"; Part 2, 39–54; Part 3, 59–86; Part 4, 131–148
Gearhart, Gretchen, 175
Gentry, Athal, 44
Gibson, Oscar Lee, 123
Giles, Jess, 43
Gillespie, James Thornwell, 123
Glass, Melinda, 30
Glenn, Frank, 41
Gold, Mabel Claire, 90
Gooding, Earl, 11
Grant, James R., photo, 119
Greathouse, Mrs., 181
Green, Dillerd, 23
Green, J. F., 185
Green, James, 23
Gregg, Mildred, 87
Gunter, T. M., 95

Hackett, Rev., 185–?
Hail, Sarah, 23
Haldiman, Dick, 146
Haley, Mary Jane, 86–89, 101
Hall, Andrew, 123–124, 127
Hankins, Rhoda, 27
Hankins, Smith S., 27
Hardin, Russell, 82
Harlan, Jack, 42
Harlan, Kathleen, 141
Harrell, Anne, 27
Harrell, Benjamin D. 27
Harrell, E., 28
Harrell, Elias, 27
Harrell, Lucinda A., 27
Harris, Defassy (Defazy), 28
Harris, Emely, 26, 30. 38
Harris, John R., 119
Harris, Marjorie, 44
Harris, Mary, 30, 31
Harris, Thomas O., 111
Harroll, E., 25
Hathcocks, Drs., 182
Hauser, Bill, 132
Haygood, James W., 179
Hebbert, H. E., 30
Hebert, H. C., 31
Hebert, Louis, 178
Helm, Dolph, 43
Helm, Katie Sue, 41
Henry, Robert, 38
Herroll, E., 26
Herroll, Elias, 37
Herzog, Henry, 112
Hester, Edna, 87
Hickman, Nelda, 93
Hight, Jack, 60
Hildebrand, Garrick D., rev., 149–151; 185–187
Hill, James, 23, 32
Hiser, Christopher, 35
Hollensworth, Carroll, 17
Holmes, J. Frank, 71, 72, 137
Homsley, Amanda, 37
Homsley, B. J., 37
Homesly, James, 27
Homesley, James M., 37
Homesly, Jane, 27
Homsley, Lucinda, 37
Homesly, Mary, 27
Homesly, William, 28
Humphrey, H. D. 57–58
Humphreys, Marguerite 87–88
Hunt, Marion Palmer,115–121

Integration, Methodists and, 162–164
"Interview with Charles Stewart," by Patricia Stone, 1–19
Irven, Margret, 21, 23
Isam, Dillard (Dillerd), 23, 24

James, Adam, 28

James, Annie, 141
Johnson, Campbell, 88
Johnson, Walter L, 123–124,125
Johnston, Abbott, 143–144
Johnston, Albert S., 77
Johnston, Albert Sidney, 178
Johnston, Mrs. Jesse Randolph, 77
Jones, Lee, 43, 77
Jones, Virgil, 176
Jones, W. D., 58

Kapp, Bille, 139
Keith, Grace Watson, 88
Kelley, Alice, photo, 98
Kelly, J. O., 16
Kelly, Joe, 53
Kennan, J. R., 16
Kincaid, Hugh, 18, 175
King, G. W., Jr., 30, 31
King, George W., 25, 26, 28–33, 38
King, Indian, 30
King, John F., 31, 33, 38
King, Liza, 30
King, Manda Jane, 30
King, Tennessee, 28, 30
Kirkpatrick, Matthew, "The Washington County Historical Society,: The Beginnings" 171–174
Kiser, Elizabeth, R., 28

Lamb, DeeDee, 173–174
Land, Pearl, photo, 98
Lansford, Tina, 79
Ledbetter, Tammi Reed, "Fayetteville's First Baptist Church: 150 Years of Serving a Vision," 101–130
Lee, Robert, 44
Lemke, W. J., 171–174, 177; *The Journal of J. L. Dickson*, revd., 185–187
Lesh, Ruth, 181
Lesh, Susan, 181
Lesly, Clive, 67
Lewis, A. B., 90
Lewis, Bert, photo, 119
Lewis, Mrs. Bert, 115
Lewis, Calvin, 22
Lewis, Caroline, 22
Lewis, Harriet, 22
Lewis, Heydon, 182
Lewis, Hugh, 22, 24, 35
Lewis, John, 22, 30
Lewis, Nancy, 22
Lewis, Mrs. Paul, 59
Lewis, Ralph, 182
Lewis, Sarah, 30
Lipsey, John W., 111
Littleton, Linda, 25
Logan, Robert, 177
Login, J. L., 38
Login, John, 30
Login, Littleton J., 25
Login, Newton, 30
Login, T. J., 30
Lollar, Reubin, 27
Lollar, Rhoda, 27
Long, B. B., 42, 51, 68, 72, 139
Long, Mrs. B. B., 42, 45, 72
Loudermilk, Jim, 156, 158, 162–163, 166
Lucinda, Maitta, 38

Maddox, R. L. "Bob, " photo, 98
Magruder, Henry, 72
Magruder, Margery, 69, 72
Magruder, Margery Anne, 72
Maguire, A. M., 38
Maguire, Ellen, 27, 30

Maguire, Hosea. M., 24, 27, 29, 31, 33, 37, 38
Maguire, Nancy, 28, 31
Mahony, Jody, 18
McCamy, Robert, 21
Marshall, Elizabeth, 24
Marshall, Hannah, 34
Marshall, Lewis, 31, 32, 33, 34
Marshall, Robert, 24
Marshel, Mary, 22
Martin, A. W., 155–170; photo, front cover, No. 4
Martin, A. W., Jr., "The Old Man and the Students: The Wesley Foundation Years of A. W. Martin, 155–170
Martin, Lloyd, 156, 166–167
Martin, Mrs. F. E., 91
"Mary Jane Haley's Recollections of Early Fayetteville Libraries," by Gretchen Gearhart, 86–89
Maupin, Frank, 142
Maxwell, Abigal, 34
Maxwell, Elizabeth, 21, 34
Maxwell, Henry, 21
Maxwell, James, 34
Maxwell, Polly, 34
Maxwell, Polley, 22
May, Ethel, photo, 97
May, John, photo, 97
Mayes, John, 100, 101, 103, 105–106, 107–108, 109, 110–111, 129; photo, 116
Mayes, Sarah, 103, 129
Mayes, W. Z. "Zebe," 103
Maynard, B. G., 110–111
McAdams, A. C., 90
McCamy, Lucinda, 17, 23, 30
McCamy, Robert (McCamey), 20, 22–26, 28, 30–36, 38
McCamey, Newton, 21
McChristian, Thomas, 28
McClellan, John, 70
McClellan, Juanita, 39
McClure, Ken, 83
McCormick, Arthur, 39, 41, 44, 52, 60, 61, 66, 68, 72, 76, 82, 83, 86, 142; photo, 74
McCormick, Bernice, 77; photo, 74
McCormick, Dolly Anne, 50, 52, 68, 72, 133; photo, 74
McCormick, Dr. E. G., photo, 74
McCormick, Grover, 40, 68, 144; photo, 74
McCormick, Mrs. Grover, photo, 74
McCormick, Lafayette (Fay), 51, 76, 146
McCormick, Mamie Gilliam (Mrs. E. G.), 40, 48, 60, 62, 68, 69, 73, 76, 83, 132, 138; photos, 46, 74
McCormick, Mattie, 135
McCormick, Ruth, 40, 42–44, 52, 67–68, 82, 83, 131, 135, 138; photo, 74
McCray, Cleas, 88
McCuistion, Ed., 177
McCuistion, Madge, 44, 51
McCuiston, Oscar, 80
McCulloch, Benjamin, 178
McGaugh, Katherine, 92
McGuire, Henry, 31
McIlroy, Jim, 11
McMillen, Allen, 32, 34
McMillen, Lydia, 34
McMillen, Wm., 28, 37
McMillon, Alan, 24
McMillon, Lotty, 23
McMullen, Lessie, 20
McNair, W. P., 93

McWhorter, Mrs. W. E., 115
Meltons, Drs., 182
Melton, Robert, 22
Methodist Assembly, Fayetteville, 181–182
Methodists' Missouri Conference of 1833, 176
Miller, Steve, 61
Mills, Minerva, 27, 30
Missionary Baptist Chuch, Fayetteville, 103
Mitchell, Jere D., 127
Mock, Dr. Will H., 43
Moore, Rudy, 18
Morrow, Arch, 79
Moulden, Mary, 27
Moulden, M. G., 30
Mountain Inn, 182–183
Mullen, Levi, 27
Mullen, Mary, 27
Mullen, William, M., 27
Murphy, Bill, 14
"Myrtle McCormick Parks Diary, The," Gretchen Gearhart, ed., Part 2, 39–54; Part 3, 59–86; Part 4, 131–148

Nelson, Henry, 76, 143
Nickell, Mollie, photo, 98
Nolan, Isaac T., 32
Nolen, Rebecca, 30
Northwestern Arkansas Baptist Female Institute, 106

Okalona, Miss. Confederate Cemetery, 177
"Old Man and the Students, The: The Wesley Foundation Years of A. W. Martin," by A. W. Martin Jr., 155–170
Oldham, Russell, 125
On the Trail of Bonnie and Clyde: Then and Now, Winston G. Ramsey, ed., revd., 55–58
Orton, Marion, 6

Page, Dick, photo, 98
Parker, Bonnie, 55–58
Parks, Barry, 39–54, 59–86, 101–130; photos, 74, 75
Parks, Donald, 39–54, 59–86, 101–130; photos, 74, 75
Parks, James Clay (Jim), 39–54, 59–86.131–148; photos, 47, 74
Parks, James Clay [II], 133
Parks, James Fay, 49, 53, 60, 70, 76, 82, 83, 85, 133; photo, 75
Parks, Janet, 49, 53, 54, 70, 85, 133, 146
Parks, Joe, 39–54, 59–86, 101–130; photo, 74
Parks, Michael, 48, 49, 50, 53, 54, 70–71, 85, 132, 135
Parks, Myrtle McCormick (Mrs. J. C.), "The Myrtle McCormick Parks Diary" Part 2, 39–54; Part 3, 59–86; Part 4, 131–148; photo, 74
Parks-Spencer, Susan, 39
Patrick, Ted, 85
Patterson, Leighton Paige, 126, 127
Pearson, B. H., 24, 25
Pearson, Homer L., 119
Peer, Edward, 104, 112
Petersen, Keith, 161
Phillips, Gordon, photo, 74
Phillips, Florence, 43, 80–81
Phillips, Jonathan, photo, 74
Phillips, Phil, 43
Phillips, W. E. N., photo, 74

Phillips, Mrs. W. E. N., photo, 74
Pigkel, F. W., photo, 119
Pittman, Bob, 82
Poole, A. D., 173
Pope, W. Kenneth, 166
Powel, James, 31
Prairie Grove Telephone Co., 39
Prewitt, Marthey, 23
Prichard, Anne, 39
Pryor, David, 17–18
Pyeatt, Barry, 138

Railroads of Northwest Arkansas, by Robert G. Winn, revd., 95–99
Ramsey, Bernard, 146
Ramsey, Winston G., ed., *On the Trail of Bonnie and Clyde: Then and Now*, revd., 55–58
Read, Florida, 87
Reid, Beulah, photo, 98
Reid, Raymond, photo, 98
Rice, Julia or Lulia, 24
Rice, Julia, 24
Rice, Lulia, 31
Rieff, Delford, 137
Rieff, Mamie, 40
Riggall, Dr. Frank, 43
Ritter, Daniel, 23
Ritter, Mahla (Mahala), 30, 31
Ritter, Marthey, 21
Ritter, Melinda, 27, 30
Ritter, Young, 21
Robbins, Margaret, 26, 30, 38
"Robert E. L. Bearden Remembers," 175–184
Rockefeller, John D., 115
Rogers, Ella, 67
Rogers, Joanne Dee. *See* Joanne Stewart.
Rolston, Lila, 87, 88
Root, F. S., 180
Ross, John, 186
Routh, B. M., 31, 33
Rozzell, Forrest, 16
Russell, Weldon, 66, 85–86
Russell, Dr. E. E., 52

Sams, Calvin, 27
Sawyer, Sophia, 106, 186
Scharlau, Charles, 5–6, 14
Scott, Joe M., *Four Years' Service in the Southern Army*, revd., 149–151
Screech, Nancy, 37–38
Seamster, Alvin, 171
Searcy, J. C., 102
Segraves, Warren, 165
Sequoyah, 182
Sharp, Tilford, 71
Sharp, Oscar, 80
Sharp, Betty Jo, 71
Sharp, Jake, 5–6
Sharp, M. J., 41
Sharp, Ottie, 71
Shauman, Mary, 91
Shaver, Jacob, 24
Shaver, Matilda, 24
Shaver, Permely, 24
Shaver, Thussey, 21
Shea, Bill, 178
Shepherd, M. L., 115
Sherman, William, 177
Shofner, G., 30
Shofner, L., 30
Shoftner, F., 24
Shoftner, N. C., 24, 30, 31
Shoftner, P. W.,24, 30, 33
Shoftner, Wm., 31
Shoftner, W. M., 24

Shoftner, Wm. S., 30
Shuler, Fred, 90–91
Shulertown, 90
Shults, Elizabeth, 37
Shults, Elizabeth J., 26
Shults, Elizabeth, L., 30
Shults, James, 32, 33, 34–35, 36
Shults, James Nathan, 37
Shults, William G., 25, 26, 27, 28, 30, 37
Shumate, Nona, 28
Simms, Baptist Wreothelsey Noel, 110
Simms, J. Bryan, 71
Smart, Murray, 113–114
Smith, Arthur, photo, 98
Smith, Blake, 123
Smith, Dovie, photo, 98
Smith, Martha J., 30, 33
Smith, Stella, photo, 98
Sonneman, Gladys, 125
Speedlin, Ethel, 45
Statler, G. R., 4
Stevenson, Eugene, 62
Stevenson, Nettie McCormick, 59
Stewart, Charles Wesley, III, 1–19; photos, 8, 9, 10
Stewart, Charles Wesley, IV, 7; photos, 8, 9
Stewart, Glenda, photo, 9
Stewart, Histaspas, 2
Stewart, James Histaspias, 2, 12; photo, 8
Stewart, James Histaspias, II, photo, 8
Stewart, Joy, 2; photo, 8
Stewart, June, 2; photo, 8
Stewart, Joanne, 7; photos, 8, 9, 10
Stewart, Lincoln, 2
Stewart, Margaret Zoellner, photo, 8
Stewart. Mettie Adams, 2; photo, 8
Stewart, Micah, photo, 9
Stewart, Orthniel, 2
Stewart, Quint, photo, 9
Stewart, Scott Edward, photo, 8
Stewart, Thomas R., 7; photos, 8, 9
Stewart, William, 2
Still, John, 21
Still, Matilda, 27
Stofner, L. S., 31
Stoftner, G., 31
Stogner, Gilson, 21
Stokenber, Jane, 38
Stokenberger, H., 31
Stokenberry, H., 29, 31, 33
Stokenbery, A., 24
Stokenbury, Harmon, 38
Stone, Patricia, "Interview with Charles Stewart," 1–19
Strain, Andrew Johnston, 28
Strain, Elizabeth, 22, 23, 27, 37, 29
Strain, Elizabeth Malisa, 20
Strain, Eveline, 30
Strain, George (G. D.), 21, 22, 28, 30, 32
Strain, Henery Madison, 22
Strain, James, 22, 27, 28–29, 33, 32, 34, 35, 36, 37
Strain, James Franklin, 20, 21, 22
Strain, Martha F., 27
Strain, Martha Jane, 20, 29, 34
Strain, Marthey Jane, 22
Strain, Mary, 21, 26, 27, 28, 30
Strain, Mary M., 27, 29, 34
Strain, Minerva, 34
Strain, Polly, 22
Strain, Polley Melissa, 22, 23

Strain, Robert, 20, 21, 22, 24–24
Strain, Sarah Jane, 22
Strain, Susan Catherine, 37
Strain, William Jack, 22
Stuchkenbar, Harmon, 26
Stuchkenbar, Jane, 26
Sugg, Ann, 171, 175
Sullins, Tom, 82
Swaney, W. W., 95–96

Tanner, George, 164, 167
Tebbetts, Jonas M., 186
Tebbetts, Marian, 106
Terry, Dave. 71
Terry, Mary Ann, 27
Journal of J. L. Dickson, The W. J. Lemke, ed., revd., 185–187
Thomas, C. J., 48
Thompson, G. W., 171
Tillman, John N., 121
Tovey, Henry, 88
Trapp, Ralph, photo, 98
Truett, George W., 112–113
Truman, Harry, 140

Van Horne, Margaret, 105
Van Horne, Thomas B.,101, 102–103, 105–107, 129
Van Dalsem, Paul, 16–17
Vance, Charles C., 92–93
Vaughan, J. E., 119
Vaughn, Malinda, 21, 23
Vaught, W. O., 125

Wade, Clifton "Deacon," 14, 15
Wade, Emaline, 32
Waganon, Jane, 27
Waganon, Russell, 27
Wages, R. E., 119
Waits, Sarah, 27
Waits, William, 27
Walden, Clint, 182
Washington Hotel, 182–183
Washington County Historical Society, art. on founding of, 171–174
Watson, Clara A., 103
Wayland, Ewing T., 72
Webb, Joy, 40
Weir, A. D., photo, 119
Weldon, Russell, 131
Wesley Foundation, 155–170
Wesley Foundation Chapel, photo, 154
West, Aaron, 23
West, Avis, 26, 30
West, George, 31
West, James, 23
West, Robert, 24
West, Sarah, 23
West, Virginia, 60
Whaley, Storm, 15
White, Wayne, 16
"White River Cumberland Presbyterian Church Records," 20–38
White, Mrs. Bob, 139
Whitsett, Eb, 67
Whittle, Walter Andrew, 112
Wilbanks, Charles Estes, 122
Williams, Charity, 35
Williams, Eveline, 38
Williams, Hannah, 27, 30
Williams, John, 26
Williams, Lucinda, 25
Williams, Mary, 27, 30
Williford, Elizabeth, 23
Williford, Martha, 27
Wilson, James, 23
Wilson, John, 26
Wilson, Malinda, 21
Winn, Burl, photo, 98

Winn, Robt. G., *Railroads of Northwest Arkansas*, revd., 149–141
Wood, Andrew Smith, 37
Wood, Catherine, 26, 28, 30, 37
Wood, Henry, D., 30
Wood, Henry Madison, 22
Wood, James Harvey, 22
Wood, Jane, 21, 22
Wood, Jarret, 20, 22, 24–25, 26, 27, 28, 31–37
Wood, John Alexander, 22
Wood, Robert Milton, 20, 22
Wood, Ruth, 20
Wood, Sarah, 25
Wood, Sarah Mailsa 20, 27, 30, 34
Wood, Sarah Malissa, 22
Wood, Thomas Jefferson, 28
Woodruff, Jim, 51, 142
Woods, A. S., 30, 31
Woods, Harvey, 31
Workman, Jim, 180

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